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IEMA Urges People to Prepare for Severe Weather

Contest will promote use of weather alert radios to receive warnings

SPRINGFIELD – With communities throughout Illinois still recovering from severe storms and record and near-record flooding in late December, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is joining with the National Weather Service (NWS) and local emergency management agencies in efforts to help people stay safe when severe weather threatens.

Those efforts include an online contest sponsored by IEMA and the Illinois Emergency Services Management Association (IESMA) that offers Illinois residents a chance to win a weather alert radio. The ‘Weather Alert Radios Save Lives’ contest will begin on Feb. 28, the first day of Severe Weather Preparedness Week in Illinois, and continue through March 31.

“We can’t stop severe weather from occurring, but we can help people better understand severe weather hazards and how they can stay safe when storms threaten their area,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “A key to being prepared is having a way to receive warnings issued by the National Weather Service. Weather alert radios can provide you with these alerts day or night, even when you’re sleeping.”

Joseph said 14 flood-related fatalities occurred in 2015, the highest annual number since records have been kept, according to the NWS. All of the fatalities were the result of vehicles traveling on flooded roadways. Illinois also experienced 69 tornadoes in 2015, which resulted in two fatalities and 27 injuries.

"Recent storms in Illinois and across the Midwest have proven how quickly flooding can develop at any time of the year," said Chris Miller, warning coordination meteorologist with the NWS office in Lincoln. "We can't stress the dangers of flooding enough, particularly for motorists. Driving into a flooded area with any type of vehicle can be deadly. The best advice is simply 'Turn around, don't drown!'"

The weather alert radio contest will be available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov beginning Feb. 28 and will run through March 31. A total of 100 weather alert radios will be awarded to randomly selected participants who register after reading information about the radios and successfully completing a five-question quiz. Winners will be announced in April. The radios were purchased by IESMA as part of an effort to increase the use of the devices in communities throughout Illinois.

“IESMA’s mission is to help protect the lives and property of the people we serve, and we’re proud to partner with IEMA on efforts that enhance the safety of people throughout the state,” said IESMA President Curtis Hawk. “This contest highlights a key component of preparedness – having a way to receive warnings from the National Weather Service. The weather alert radios awarded through this contest will help protect many people. We are proud to again sponsor this important program.”

IEMA and the NWS developed a *Severe Weather Preparedness Guide*, which provides information about tornadoes, severe storms, lightning and flooding along with recommended actions to take before, during and after each of these weather events. It is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

Preparedness tips and information are also available through the Ready Illinois Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/ReadyIllinois) and Twitter Page (twitter.com/ReadyIllinois).

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